Photos by STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

Mannequins found in the old Farrell & Eddy department store in Camas are scheduled for auction Saturday morning.

Sale of the last century

Long-stored contents of closed Camas store to be sold at auction

By MARGARET ELLIS
Columbian staff writer

CAMAS — No one cleaning out the old Farrell & Eddy building in downtown Camas will shake hands. Instead they wave, showing palms black with dust.

What's left of the store's merchandise has had plenty of time to collect a thick layer of grime.

"We've got all sorts of body parts."

ev Amundson
CTION SERVICE
OWNER, ON
ANNEQUINS AT
RRELL & EDDY

"There are things here that definitely haven't seen the light of day in 70, 80 years," said Tina Wheeler, an employee of Amundson Estate Sales and Auctions Inc. who is helping clean up in preparation for an auction Saturday.

The store's owner, Glenda Farrell Schuh, is clearing out the merchandise and preparing to sell or lease the building. The Farrell & Eddy department store operated in Camas for almost 100 years before the family, faced with an uncertain retail future, closed it in 1998.

Tina Wheeler cleans one of the more than 200 vintage hats from the old department store. The hats will be sold Saturday.

"They all shop in the shopping malls, on the Internet, through mail-order services; it's not like the retail traffic we used to get," she said.

When the store closed, the newer clothes were sold, but boxes and boxes of older merchandise, some dating to the 1910s, sat forgotten in storage.

Among them are hats, hundreds of hats, from the 1920s and the 1910s. Hats that Bev Amundson, owner of the auction service, says might sell for $50 on Saturday have handwritten price tags reading $9.75. Some of the most spectacular have a label that says Mrs. C.E. Farrell.

She was responsible for creating Camas' first department store. Her husband, Charles, bought the building, a grocery at the time, and his wife asked for a corner where she could

AUCTION, *page C6*

FARRELL & EDDY AUCTION

■ A preview of the merchandise begins at 8 a.m. Saturday at the Farrell & Eddy Building at 305 N.E. Fourth Ave., Camas. The auction begins at 10 a.m. and is expected to last five hours. There will be a food wagon and restrooms.

Auction:

From page C1

sell her hats.

"From the making of hats in the back of the grocery store, it turned into a clothing store," said Schuh, their granddaughter.

There are old clothes, fur coats, ancient bras, and ladies' blouses. "Some of them they're going to want just for the buttons," Amundson said, pointing out a brown blouse with rectangular buttons, a tiny rose in the middle of each.

Collectors will be interested in the Depression glass, a celluloid desk set, and toys still in their original boxes.

There are items that will be in demand as oddities, relics of bygone time, such as a group of old mannequins, including two busts of ladies fashioned from wax and with real hair.

"We've got all sorts of body parts," Amundson said.

There even will be old-fashioned refrigerators and ovens and other furniture from the upstairs apartments that have hardwood floors.

There haven't been any tenants since 1973, and the apartments have been used in recent years to store old magazines. An issue of Good Housekeeping from 1926 has an address label that says Mrs. C.E. Farrell, Camas, Wa. "That's all they needed," Amundson said.

STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

Items to be auctioned include blouses and fur coats, dating back to the 1910s.

Murphy beds sit inside closets, and each apartment has cabinets with built-in flour sifters.

Those aren't for sale. The new owner is thinking about renovating the building and renting out the rooms. The cabinets will stay.

Amundson said she really can't guess how the auction will go. For years, some folks have been bugging Schuh to let them see what's left of her family's store. Now they have a chance to bid on it.

"We're going to have lots of first-time bidders," Amundson said.